Current Verse.

A Puzzle.

Old Nathan was out in the garden
One beautiful flower-sweet day,
When Dorothy, golden-haired maiden,
Came pensively wandering that way.
"And isn't this very fine weather?
I never saw finer," said he
But she made reply: "Why *I* think it
As cheerless a morn as could be."
"As cheerless!" repeated old Nathan,
Half in doubt if he'd heard her aright
Then he muttered: "She's daft," for he knew not
She had quarreled with Robert last night.

The day was departing; it's sunshine
Had vanished: the wind whistled shrill,
The birds hurried home to their nestlings,
And the air grew quite heavy and chill.
The gardener hastened to shelter
His tender young plants, when again
Dolly passed him—*this* time with light footsteps—
And she called in the merriest strain:
"Oh, isn't the weather just lovely?"
While her face fairly shone through the mist.
"She daft," said old Nathan. He knew not
The lovers had met and had kissed.
—*Margaret Eytinge, in Harper's Bazar.*

Soto Voce.

Tired? Of course—and you feel the heat—
Come, let us sit beside the door;
Yes, German waltzes are so sweet—
Such time, and such a perfect floor—
And such a partner, did you say?
Now, if you quiz me, I am dumb!
You know you wish me miles away—
(My darling—will she never come?)

No—was it really last July
We met at Mrs. Norton's ball?
How time and casual faces fly!
That isn't what I meant at all—
You are so quick—I should have said
Mine is a face you soon forget,—
But yours would turn a hermit's head—
(Is that her voice? Not yet—not yet!)

How well your sister looks to-night!
I hear she is a fearful flirt;
Well some eyes leave a wound that's slight,
While others make a life-long hurt—
Not yours, of course—I mean—you know—
Your eyes spread ruin awares!
Why, I was crippled long ago—
(I hear her laughing on the stairs!)

Who comes? Your cousin? Yes—she's late—
I thought just now I heard her voice;
What! she will seal one lover's fate
By showing she has made—a choice?
The roses in her hair, you said—
To token of them will be the sign!—
Look! Are the roses white or red?
(My God, she wears his flowers, not mine!)
—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

A September Violet.

For days the peaks wore hoods of cloud,
The slopes were veiled in chilly rain;
We said: It is the summer's shroud,
And with the brooks we moaned aloud,
Will sunshine never come again?

At last the west wind brought us one
Serene, warm, cloudless, crystal day,
As though September, having blown
A blast of tempest, now had thrown
A gauntlet to the favored May.

Backward to spring our fancies flew,
And, careless of the course of Time,
The bloomy days began anew,
Then, as a happy day comes true,
Or as a poet finds his rhyme—

Half wondered at, half unbelieved—
I found thee, friendless of the flowers!
Then summer's joys came back, green leaved,
And its doomed dead, awhile reprieved,
First learned how truly they were ours.

Dear violet! Did the autumn bring
Thee vernal dreams, till thou, like me,
Didst climb to thy imagining?
Or was it that the thoughtful spring
Did come again in search of thee?
—*Century.*

THE STORY OF A MINE.

BY BRET HARTE.

[Copyrighted, 1886, by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., and published by arrangement with them.]

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW IT BECAME FAMOUS.

YUBA BILL.

YUBA BILL was right in believing that Wiles would lose no time at Rawlings. He left there on a fleet horse before Bill had returned with the broken down coach to the last station, and distanced the telegram sent to detain him two hours. Leaving the stage road and its dangerous telegraphic stations, he pushed southward to Denver over the army trail in company with a half-breed packer, crossing the Missouri before Thatcher had reached Julesburg. When Thatcher was at Omaha Wiles was already in St. Louis; and as the Pullman car containing the hero of the "Blue Mass" mine rolled into Chicago Wiles was already walking the streets of the national capital. Nevertheless he had time en route to sink in the waters of the North Platte, with many expressions of disgust, the little black portemanteau belonging to Thatcher, containing his dressing case, a few unimportant letters and an extra shirt, to wonder why simple men did not travel with their important documents and valuables and to set on foot some prudent and cautious inquiries regarding his own lost carpet bag and its important contents.

But for these trifles he had every reason to be satisfied with the progress of his plans. "It's all right," said Mrs. Hopkinson, merrily; "while you and Gashwiler have been working with your 'stock' and treating the whole world as if it could be bribed, I've done more with that earnest, self-believing, self-deceiving and perfectly pathetic Roscommon than all you fellows put together. Why, I've told his pitiful story, and drawn tears from the eyes of senators and cabinet ministers. More than that, I've introduced him into society, put him in a dress coat—such a figure!—and you know how the best folk worship everything that is outre as the sincere thing. I've made him a complete success. Why, only the other night, when Senator Misnancy and Judge Fitzwaddle were here, after making him tell his story—which you know, I think he really believes—I sang: 'There Came to the Beach a Poor Exile of Erin,' and my husband told me afterward it was worth, at least, a dozen votes."

"But about this rival of yours—this niece of Garcia's?"

"Another of your blunders; you men know nothing of women. Firstly, she's a swarthy little brunette, with dots for eyes; and strides like a man, dresses like a dowdy, don't wear stays, and has no style. Then, she's a single woman, and alone; and, although she affects to be an artist, and has Bohemian ways, don't you see she can't go into society without a chaperon or somebody to go with her. Nonsense."

"But," persisted Wiles, "she must have some power; there's Judge Mason and Senator Peabody, who are constantly talking about her; and Dinwiddie, of Virginia, escorted her through the Capitol the other day."

Mistress Hopkinson laughed.

"Mason and Peabody aspire to be thought literary and artistic, and Dinwiddie wanted to pique *me!*"

"But Thatcher is no fool——"

"Is Thatcher a lady's man?" queried the lady, suddenly.

"Hardly, I should say," responded Wiles. "He pretends to be absorbed in his swindle and devoted to his mine; and I don't think that even you—" he stopped with a slight sneer.

"There, you are misunderstanding me again, and, what is worse, you are misunderstanding your case. Thatcher is pleased with her because he has probably seen no one else. Wait till he comes to Washington and has an opportunity for comparison," and she cast a frank glance at her mirror, where Wiles, with a sardonic bow, left her standing.

Mr. Gashwiler was quite as confident of his own success with congress. "We are within a few days of the end of the session. We will manage to have it taken up and rushed through before that fellow Thatcher knows what he is about."

"If it could be done before he gets here," said Wiles, "it's a reasonably sure thing. He is delayed two days. He might have been delayed longer." Here Mr. Wiles sighed. If the accident had happened on a mountain road, and the stage had been precipitated over the abyss, what valuable time would have been saved, and success become a surety! But Mr. Wiles' functions as an advocate did not include murder; at least, he was doubtful if it could be taxed as costs.

"We need have no fears, sir," resumed Mr. Gashwiler; "the matter is now in the hands of the highest tribunal of appeal in the country. It will meet, sir, with inflexible justice. I have already prepared some remarks——"

"By the way," interrupted Wiles infelicitously, "where's your young man—your private secretary—Dobbs?"

The congressman for a moment looked confused. "He is not here. And I must correct your error in applying that term to him. I have never put my confidence in the hands of any one."

"But you introduced him to me as your secretary."

"A mere honorary title, sir. A brevet rank. I might, it is true, have thought to repose such a trust in him. But I was deceived, sir, as I fear I am too apt to be when I permit my feelings as a man to overcome my duty as an American legislator. Mr. Dobbs enjoyed my patronage and the opportunity it gave me to introduce him into public life only to abuse it. He became, I fear, deeply indebted. His extravagance was unlimited, his ambition unbounded, but without, sir, a cash basis. I advanced money to him from time to time upon the little property you so generously extended to him for his services. But it was quickly dissipated. Yet, sir, such is the ingratitude of man that his family lately appealed to me for assistance. I felt it was necessary to be stern, and I refused. I would not for the sake of his family say anything, but I have missed, sir, books from my library. On the day after he left two volumes of patent office reports and a Blue book of congress, purchased that day by me at a store on Pennsylvania avenue, were *missing*—missing! I had difficulty, sir, great difficulty in keeping it from the papers!"

As Mr. Wiles had heard the story already from Gashwiler's acquaintances, with more or less free comment on the gifted legislator's economy, he could not help thinking that the difficulty had been great indeed. But he only fixed his malevolent eye on Gashwiler and said:

"So he is gone, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you've made an enemy of him? That's bad."

Mr. Gashwiler tried to look dignifiedly unconcerned; but something in his visitor's manner made him uneasy.

"I say it is bad, if you have. Listen. Before I left here, I found at a boarding house where he had boarded, and still owed a bill, a trunk which the landlord retained. Opening it, I found some letters and papers of yours, with certain memoranda of his, which I thought ought to be in your possession. As an alleged friend of his, I redeemed the trunk by paying the amount of his bill, and secured the more valuable papers."

Gashwiler, whose face had grown apoplectically suffused as Wiles went on, at last gasped: "But you got the trunk, and have the papers?"

"Unfortunately, no, and that's why it's bad."

"But, good God! what have you done with them?"

"I've lost them somewhere on the Overland road."

Mr. Gashwiler sat for a few moments speechless, vacillating between a purple rage and a pallid fear. Then he said hoarsely:

"They are all blank forgeries—every one of them."

"Oh, no!" said Wiles, smiling blandly on his dexter side, and enjoying the whole scene malevolently with his sinister eye. "Your papers are all genuine, and I won't say are not all right, but unfortunately I had in the same bag some memoranda of my own for the use of my client, that, you understand, might be put to some bad use if found by a clever man."

The two rascals looked at each other. There is on the whole really very little honor among thieves—at least great ones—and the inferior rascal succumbed at the reflection of what he might do if he were in the other rascal's place. "See here, Wiles," he said, relaxing his dignity with the perspiration that oozed from every pore, and made the collar of his shirt a mere limp rag. "See here, we"—this first use of the plural was equivalent to a confession—"we must get them papers."

"Of course," said Wiles coolly, "if we can, and if Thatcher doesn't get wind of them."

"He cannot."

"He was on the coach when I lost them, coming east."

Mr. Gashwiler paled again. In the emergency he had recourse to the sideboard and a bottle, forgetting Wiles. Ten minutes before Wiles would have remained seated; but it is recorded that he rose, took the bottle from the gifted Gashwiler's fingers, helped himself first, and then sat down.

"Yes, but, my boy," said Gashwiler, now rapidly changing situations with the cooler Wiles; "yes, but, old fellow," he added, poking Wiles with a fat forefinger, "don't you see the whole thing will be up before he gets here."

"Yes," said Wiles gloomily, "but those lazy, easy, honest men have a way of popping up just at the nick of time. They never need hurry; all things wait for them. Why, don't you remember that on the very day Mrs. Hopkinson and I and you got the president to sign that patent, that very day one of them d——n fellows turns up from San Francisco or Australia, having taken his own time to get here—gets here about half an hour after the president had signed the patent and sent it over to the office, finds the right man to introduce him to the president, has a talk with him, makes him sign an order countermanding its issuance, and undoes all that has been done in six years in one hour."

"Yes, but congress is a tribunal that does not revoke its decrees," said Gashwiler with a return of his old manner; "at least" he added, observing an incredulous shrug in the shoulder of his companion, "at least during the session."

"We shall see," said Wiles, quietly taking his hat.

"We shall see, sir," said the member from Remus with dignity.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT CULTURE DID FOR IT

A SENATOR.

THERE was at this time in the senate of the United States an eminent and respected gentleman, scholarly, orderly, honorable, and radical—the fit representative of a scholarly, orderly, honorable and radical commonwealth. For many years he had held his trust with conscious rectitude, and a slight depreciation of other forms of merit; and for as many years had been as regularly returned to his seat by his constituency with equally conscious rectitude in themselves and an equal skepticism regarding others. Removed by his nature beyond the reach of certain temptations, and by circumstances beyond even the knowledge of others, his social and political integrity was spotless. An orator and practical debater, his refined tastes kept him from personality, and the public recognition of the complete unselfishness of his motives and the magnitude of his dogmas protected him from scurrility. His principles had never been appealed to by a bribe; he had rarely been approached by an emotion.

A man of polished taste in art and literature, and possessing the means to gratify it, his luxurious home was filled with treasures he had himself collected and further enhanced by the stamp of his appreciation. His library had not only the elegance of adornment that his wealth could bring and his taste approve, but a certain refined negligence of habitual use and the easy disorder of the artist's workshop. All this was quickly noted by a young girl who stood on its threshold at the close of a dull January day.

The card that had been brought to the senator bore the name of "Carmen de Haro;" and modestly in the right hand corner, in almost microscopic script, the further description of herself as "Artist." Perhaps the picturesqueness of the name and its historic suggestion caught the scholar's taste, for when to his request, through his servant, that she would be kind enough to state her business, she replied as frankly that her business was personal to himself, he directed that she should be admitted. Then intrenching himself behind his library table, overlooking a bastion of books and a glacis of pamphlets and papers, and throwing into his forehead and eyes an expression of utter disqualification for anything but the business before him, he calmly awaited the intruder.

She came, and for an instant stood, hesitatingly, framing herself as a picture in the door. Mrs. Hopkinson was right—she had "no style," unless an original and half foreign quaintness could be called so. There was a desperate attempt visible to combine an American shawl with the habits of a mantilla, and it was always slipping from one shoulder, that was so supple and vivacious as to betray the deficiencies of an education in stays. There was a cluster of black curls around her low forehead, fitting her so closely as to seem to be part of the sealskin cap she wore. Once, from the force of habit, she attempted to put her shawl over her head and talk through the folds gathered under her chin, but an astonished look from the senator checked her. Nevertheless he felt relieved, and, rising, motioned her to a chair with a heartiness he would have scarcely shown to a Parisian toilleta. And when, with two or three quick, long steps she reached his side and showed a frank, innocent but strong and determined little face, feminine only in its flash of eye and beauty of lip and chin curves, he put down the pamphlet he had taken up somewhat ostentatiously and gently begged to know her business.

I think I have once before spoken of her voice—an organ more often cultivated by my fair countrywomen for singing than for speaking, which, considering that much of our practical relations with the sex are carried on without the aid of an opera score, seems a mistaken notion of theirs—and of its sweetness, gentle inflexion, and musical emphasis. She had the advantage of having been trained in a musical language, and came of a race with whom catarrhs and sore throats were rare. So that in a few brief phrases she sang the senator into acquiescence as she imparted the plain libretto of her business—namely, a desire to see some of his rare engravings."

Now the engravings in question were certain etchings of the early Great Apprentices of the art, and were, I am happy to believe, extremely rare. From my unprofessional view they were exceedingly bad—showing the mere genesis of something since perfected, but dear, of course, to the true collector's soul; I don't believe that Carmen really admired them either. But the minx knew that the senator prided himself on having the only 'pot hooks' of the great 'A,' or the first artistic efforts of 'B'—I leave the real names to be filled in by the connoisseur,—and the senator became interested. For the last year, two or three of these abominations had been hanging in his study, utterly ignored by the casual visitor. But here was appreciation! "She was," she added, "only a poor young artist, unable to purchase such treasures, but equally unable to resist the opportunity afforded her, even at the risk of seeming bold, or of obtruding upon a great man's privacy," etc., etc.

This flattery, which, if offered in the usual legal tender of the country, would have been looked upon as counterfeit, delivered here in a foreign accent, with a slightly tropical warmth, was accepted by the senator as genuine. These children of the sun are so impulsive! We, of course, feel a little pity for the person who thus transcends our standard of good taste and violates our conventional canon—but they are always sincere. The cold New Englander saw nothing wrong in one or two direct and extravagant compliments, that would have insured his visitor's early dismissal if tendered in the clipped metallic phrases of the commonwealth he represented.

So that in a few moments the black, curly head of the little artist and the white, flowing locks of the senator were close together bending over the rack that contained the engravings. It was then that Carmen, listening to a graphic description of the early rise of art in the Netherlands, forgot herself and put her shawl around her head, holding its folds in her little brown hand. In this situation they were, at different times during the next two hours, interrupted by five congressmen, three senators, a cabinet officer and a judge of the supreme bench—each of whom was quickly but courteously dismissed. Popular sentiment, however, broke out in the hall.

"Well, I'm blanked, but this gets me." (The speaker was a territorial delegate.)

"At this time o' life, too, lookin' over pictures with a gal young enough to be his grandchild." (This from a venerable official, since suspected of various erotic irregularities.)

"She don't handsome any." (The honorable member from Dakota.)

"This accounts for his protracted silence during the sessions." (A serious colleague from the senator's own state.)

"Oh, blank it all!" (Omnes.)

Four went home to tell their wives. There are few things more touching in the matrimonial compact than the superb frankness with which each confides to each the various irregularities of their friends. It is upon these sacred confidences that the firm foundations of marriage rest unshaken.

Of course the objects of this comment, at least *one* of them, were quite oblivious. "I trust," said Carmen, timidly, when they had for the fourth time regarded in rapt admiration an abominable something by some Dutch woodchopper, "I trust I am not keeping you from your great friends"—her pretty eyelids were cast down in tremulous distress—"I should never forgive myself. Perhaps it is important business of the state?"

"Oh, dear, no! *They* will come again—it's *their* business."

The senator meant it kindly. It was as near the perilous edge of a compliment as your average cultivated Boston man ever ventures, and Carmen picked it up, femininely, by its sentimental end. "And I suppose *I* shall not trouble you again?"

"I shall always be proud to place the portfolio at your disposal. Command me at any time," said the senator, with dignity.

"You are kind. You are good," said Carmen, "and I—I am but—look you—only a poor girl from California, that you know not."

"Pardon me, I know your country well." And indeed he could have told her the exact number of bushels of wheat to the acre in her own county of Monterey, its voting population, its political bias. Yet of the more important product before him, after the manner of book-read men, he knew nothing.

Carmen was astonished, but respectful. It transpired presently that she was not aware of the rapid growth of the silkworm in her own district, knew nothing of the Chinese question, and very little of the American mining laws. Upon these questions the senator enlightened her fully. "Your name is historic, by the way," he said pleasantly. "There was a Knight of Alcantara, a 'de Haro,' one of the emigrants with La Casas."

Carmen nodded her head quickly. "Yes; my great-great-g-r-e-a-t grandfather!"

The senator stared.

"Oh, yes. I am the niece of Victor Castro, who married my father's sister."

"The Victor Castro of the 'Blue Mass' mine?" asked the senator abruptly.

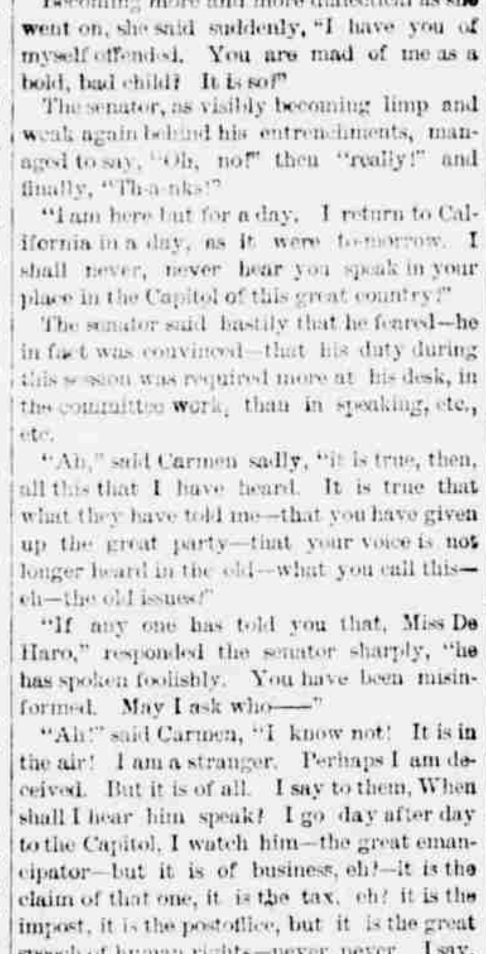
"Yes," she said quietly.

Had the senator been of the Gashwiler type he would have expressed himself, after the average masculine fashion, by a long-drawn whistle. But his only perceptible appreciation of a sudden astonishment and suspicion in his mind was a lowering of the social thermometer of the room so decided that poor Carmen looked up innocently, chilled and drew her shawl closer around her shoulders.

"I have something more to ask," said Carmen, hanging her head—"it is a great, oh, a very great favor."

The senator had retreated behind his bastion of books again, and was visibly preparing for an assault. He saw it all now. He had been, in some vague way, deluded. He had given confidential audience to the niece of one of the Great Claimants before congress. The inevitable ax had come to the grindstone. What might not this woman dare ask of him? He was the more implacable that he felt he had already been prepossessed—and honestly prepossessed—in her favor. He was angry with her for having pleased him. Under the icy polish of his manner there were certain Puritan callosities caused by early straight lacing. He was not yet quite free from his ancestor's cheerful ethics that Nature, as represented by an Impulse, was as much to be restrained as Order represented by a Quaker.

Without apparently noticing his manner, Carmen went on, with a certain potential freedom of style, gesture and manner scarcely to be indicated in her mere words. "You know, then, I am of Spanish blood, and that, what was my adopted country, our motto was 'God and Liberty.' It was of you, sir—the great Emancipator—the apostle of that Liberty—the friend of the down-trodden and oppressed—that I, as a child, first knew. In the histories of this great country I have read of you, I have learned your orations. I have longed to hear you in your own pulpit deliver the creed of my ancestors. To hear you, of yourself, speak, ah! Madre de Dios! what shall I say—speak the oration eloquent—to make the—what you call—the debate, that is what I have for so long hoped. Eh! Pardon—you are thinking me foolish—wild, eh?—a small child—eh?"



"To hear you, of yourself, speak."

Becoming more and more dialectical as she went on, she said suddenly, "I have you of myself offended. You are mad of me as a bold, bad child? It is so?"

The senator, as visibly becoming limp and weak again behind his entrenchments, managed to say, "Oh, no!" then "really!" and finally, "Th-a-nks!"

"I am here but for a day. I return to California in a day, as it were to-morrow. I shall never, never hear you speak in your place in the Capitol of this great country?"

The senator said hastily that he feared—he in fact was convinced—that his duty during this session was required more at his desk, in the committee work, than in speaking, etc., etc.

"Ah," said Carmen sadly, "it is true, then, all this that I have heard. It is true that what they have told me—that you have given up the great party—that your voice is not longer heard in the old—what you call this—eh—the old issues?"

"If any one has told you that, Miss De Haro," responded the senator sharply, "he has spoken foolishly. You have been misinformed. May I ask who——"

"Ah!" said Carmen, "I know not! It is in the air! I am a stranger. Perhaps I am deceived. But it is of all. I say to them, When shall I hear him speak? I go day after day to the Capitol, I watch him—the great emancipator—but it is of business, eh?—it is the claim of that one, it is the tax, eh? it is the impost, it is the postoffice, but it is the great speech of human rights—never, never. I say, 'How arrives all this?' And some say, and shake their heads, 'Never again he speaks.' He is what you call 'played—yes, it is so, eh? —played out.' I know it not—it is a word from Bos-ton, perhaps? They say he has—eh, I speak not the English well—the party he has shaken, 'shook'—yes—he has the party 'shaken,' eh? It is right—it is the language of Bos-ton, eh?"

"Permit me to say, Miss De Haro," returned the senator, rising with some asperity, "that you seem to have been unfortunate in your selection of acquaintances, and still more so in your ideas of the derivations of the English tongue. The—er—the—er—expressions you have quoted are not common to Boston, but emanate, I believe, from the west."

Carmen De Haro contritely buried everything but her black eyes in her shawl.

"No one," he continued, more gently, sitting down again, "has the right to forecast from my past what I intend to do in the future, or designate the means I may choose to serve the principles I hold or the party I represent. Those are my functions. At the same time should occasion or opportunity—for we are within a day or two of the close of the session——"

"Yes," interrupted Carmen sadly, "I see—it will be some business, some claim, something for somebody—ah! Madre de Dios—you will not speak, and I——"

"When do you think of returning?" asked the senator, with grave politeness; "when are we to lose you?"

"I shall stay to the last—to the end of the session," said Carmen. "And *now* I shall go." She got up and pulled her shawl viciously over her shoulders, with a pretty pettishness, perhaps the most feminine thing she had done that evening. Possibly, the most genuine.

The senator smiled affably: "You do not deserve to be disappointed in either case; but it is later than you imagine; let me help you on the shorter distance in my carriage; it is at the door."

He accompanied her gravely to the carriage. As it rolled away she buried her little figure in its ample cushions and chuckled to herself, albeit a little hysterically. When she had reached her destination she found herself crying, and hastily, and somewhat angrily, dried her eyes as she drew up at the door of her lodgings.

"How have you prospered?" asked Mr. Harlowe, of counsel for Royal Thatcher, as he gallantly assisted her from the carriage. "I have been waiting here for two hours; your interview must have been prolonged—that was a good sign."

"Don't ask me now," said Carmen, a little savagely, "I'm worn out and tired."

"Mr. Harlowe bowed. "I trust you will be better to-morrow, for we expect our friend, Mr. Thatcher."

Carmen's brown cheek flushed slightly. "He should have been here before. Where is he? What was he doing?"

"He was snowed up on the plains. He is coming as fast as steam can carry him; but he may be too late."

Carmen did not reply.

The lawyer lingered. "How did you find the great New England senator?" he asked, with a slight professional levity.

Carmen was tired, Carmen was worried, Carmen was a little self-reproachful, and she kindled easily. Consequently she said, idly:

"I found him a *gentleman!*"

[To be Continued.]